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RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHVI #0879 1721608  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 201608Z JUN 08  
FM AMEMBASSY VIENNA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0428  
INFO RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1419

UNCLAS VIENNA 000879

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [AU](#)

SUBJECT: AUSTRIA SEEKS U.S. SPEAKER FOR CONFERENCE ON  
TERRORISM AND INTERNATIONAL LAW

[¶1.](#) Summary: The Austrian Red Cross (OeRK) and the Austrian MFA (BMeiA) are presenting a conference about human rights issues called "A legal black hole? The War on Terror, human rights, and international humanitarian law." This one-day conference will take place on Sept. 15th, 2008, and includes speakers who specialize in international law and human rights. OeRK and BMeiA have invited the USG to send a representative from the State Department to speak. This cable contains an action request (see paragraph 4). End Summary.

[¶2.](#) Overview: As part of a series of conferences highlighting Austria's commitment to the rule of international law, the September conference will focus on human rights and international law in the context of the War on Terror. Speakers expected to present include Dr. Christiane Hoehn, international law expert from the secretariat of the EU Council; Ambassador Ferdinand Trauttmansdorff, head of the international law division of BMeiA; Dr. Niels Melzer, expert from the international law department of the International Committee of the Red Cross; and Prof. Wolfram Karl of the University of Salzburg. The intended audience are students, young journalists and others who shape the Austrian media; about 30 attendees are expected.

[¶3.](#) The program will be focused on the application of international law to terrorism suspects, with a critical look at U.S. practices in Guantanamo and the use of robust national security measures, including rendition. Based on the information provided to the Embassy, the conference is likely to reflect the view that international law should favor individual's rights over security interests, even in the fight against terrorism. Participation in the conference will likely require a robust defense of U.S. practices and its application of international law.

[¶4.](#) Action Request: Participation in conference is not critical. However, it is a valuable public diplomacy opportunity. Given this, the U.S. Embassy in Vienna would welcome participation by the USG in this conference and the attendance of an informed official from the State Department. Kilner